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Young Jack Harkaway And the Pearl Divers of Ceylon.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.



Koko did not attempt to struggle, as Cossim, who was loyal to his employer, held him in an iron grip. Up came Jack. He was hauled into the boat by Harry and Syed, divested of his helmet, and enabled to look round. He saw Koko on his back with Cossim bending over him.

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Young Jack Harkaway

AND THE

PEARL DIVERS OF CEYLON.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG,

Author of "Young Jack Harkaway and the Idols of Gold," "Young Jack Harkaway Fighting the Moors," "Mole Among the Mussulmans," "Young Jack Harkaway in Spain," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST PEARL.

THERE was in the early morning a lovely azure haze floating over the beautiful Bay of Colombo.

The harbor was dotted with ships belonging to all nations.

Young Jack Harkaway was staying at a hotel which looked out upon the harbor.

It was called the Hotel of the World.

He had been introduced to it by his new friend Manton Marvel.

A Frenchman, M. Picard, ran it.

With young Jack were Harry Girdwood, Mr. Mole and Monday, as well as Marvel.

They had come out to Ceylon to engage in the pearl fishery.

After breakfast Jack was seated in his private room. Mole, Harry Girdwood and Monday had gone out to see the town.

Manton Marvel was on an expedition.

It was his task to procure a man who had boats and divers of experience at his command.

Presently he came in, accompanied by a middle aged Cingalese with a long beard and a saturnine countenance.

"This is Cossim, Mr. Harkaway," he exclaimed. "He has the boats and the men."

Cossim bowed.

"At your service, sir," he said. "I am a well known, reliable man. You can depend on me."

"I shall be glad to engage you. Of course you know what I am here for."

"Pearl fishing," replied Cossim.

"Precisely."

"I can put you on some reefs that have never yet been properly explored."

"Do you think we shall have a good find?"

"I am sure of it. My two best divers, Koko and Syed shall be your servants."

"Where are they?" asked Jack.

"Outside, Excellency!"

"Bring them in, I should like to see them. Call them, please."

"Certainly," replied Cossim.

He went outside and brought in two natives, lithe and supple.

There was something about Koko that Jack thought suspicious. He could not look him in the face. His eyes roamed all over the room as if he was investigating the pattern of the carpet, or wondering what the ceiling was made of.

"I am going to dive as well as you," said Jack. "In San Francisco, I purchased a patent diver's dress, head tubes, air tubes and everything complete."

"Take care of sharks," replied Koko.

"Are there many about?"

"Sahib, the bay is full. It swarms with them."

"How do you manage to escape?"

"We fight the tigers of the sea," said Koko. "Every time we go down we hold our lives in our hands, but we carry a knife."

"Will that protect you?"

"I can stay under water over two minutes. If a shark comes near me I pull the cord which is around my body. I am drawn up. The

shark has to turn on his back to bite. I stab him in the belly. That settles him."

"Is that the way you do it?"

"Come out to-day," said Cossim, "and you will see the way the thing is worked."

"By all means. Let us make a start at once. What do you say, Marvel?" replied Jack.

"I think it would be a good idea," answered Manton Marvel. "The sooner we begin the better."

They all left the room and walked down to the quay. At the bottom of a flight of stone steps was a boat capable of holding half a dozen persons.

They got in and the two coolies who were in charge of the boat rowed them to the reef which Cossim had selected as a likely and promising fishing ground.

When they arrived Koko and Syed stripped themselves naked, having nothing on but a loin cloth.

They attached some lead to their feet to sink them, and a cord wound round a windlass was tied under their arms.

When they wanted to come up all they had to do was to give the rope a jerk.

Then the coolies would turn the handle of the windlass and bring them up in less than no time.

It was decided that Koko should go down first.

The depth was not more than ten fathoms. The sea was calm and placid.

Down in its green depths could be seen the weed covered rocks, at the feet of which the pearl bearing oysters were lying.

It must not be supposed that every one of these large crustacea contains a pearl.

Far from it.

They are very far and few between.

A diver, in the course of a day's work, may bring up a couple of hundred, and not one will be found.

It is a mere matter of luck.

For days the men may fish and meet with no reward.

"Lower away," cried Koko.

He slid over the side of the boat, the rope was played out, and he descended like a stone to the bottom.

In one hand he held a sharp, long-bladed knife, in the other a red basket.

In this he would put the oysters he gathered from the rocks.

Of course there would not be many in one dive, as he would only be able to stay under water for a brief space.

There were no sharks to be seen.

The tide was ebbing, and they generally came inside the bar with high water.

Still it was never safe to trust to this.

The marine monsters were always hovering about in the depths of the sea.

Those on board the boat distinctly saw all Koko's movements.

He alighted on the reef, grabbed as many oysters as he could, put them in his bag and jerked the rope.

This was the signal to be hauled up, and the windlass was set in motion by Cossim and Syed.

It was an exciting moment in this novel sport to young Jack.

Expectation ran high in his breast. What would the result of the dive be? A few minutes would suffice to show. "Is 't a win or a blank? Who'll bet?" exclaimed Manton Marvel. "A win for a dollar," replied Jack. "I'll take you; it's a wager!" Koko was drawn into the boat. He laid down exhausted, inhaling the air. His basket was seized upon and the contents emptied out. The catch was eleven, some large, others small. Eager hands pried the oysters open with knives, but not a pearl was to be seen. Jack was disappointed. "I've won my bet, but cheer up, better luck next time," Manton Marvel exclaimed. "It is often this way." "Yes," said Cossim, "I have been a week fishing and not paid expenses." "Is that so?" Jack remarked. "Yes, sahib, and lo! all at once comes a prize!" "It must be like gambling." "Exactly; a deal of the cards or a throw of the dice." It was now Syed's turn to go down to the reef. He had scarcely reached the bottom when a huge shark was seen approaching him. Abandoning every idea of gathering oysters from the rock he pulled the cord. The windlass was set to work, but before he had gone far the shark turned on its back, opened its huge jaws, and attacked him with a skill born of practice in his perilous profession. Syed fought the monster. Twice he stabbed it with his knife, obscuring the water with blood and ascended higher. He was out of its reach. But another danger threatened him. When near the surface a second shark attacked him. His movements were narrowly watched by those on board the boat. Suddenly they were thrilled with horror. Syed, experienced diver as he was, lost his nerve and dropped his knife. It sank to the bottom of the sea. Here was a terrible situation. He was completely at the mercy of the shark. "By Heaven, he is lost," cried Jack. "Not so," replied Manton Marvel. "I will save him." "How? You cannot do it." "I will have a good try anyway." Snatching up an oyster knife, Marvel divested himself hurriedly of his coat and took a header into the water. He reached the shark just in time to deal him a blow. It was not fatal. At the same time it served to divert the monster's attention. Syed escaped his two rows of serrated teeth and was pulled up in safety. But an awful struggle—a fight for life or death—was before brave, courageous Manton Marvel. The shark, now smelling human flesh, made a ferocious onslaught upon him. Having no weight on his feet, and not being used to staying under water, Marvel rose. He got in one jab at the shark and shot up. Eager hands were held out to help him into the boat. Alas! he never reached them. The shark seized him by the leg and he was dragged down. It was a painful and sickening sight. Every one on the boat shivered with silent soul deadening horror. Soon the unhappy young man was entirely lost to sight. The sea was ensanguined, and nothing could be seen of him. "Good Lord!" exclaimed Jack; "this is too awful!" "He should not have been so venturesome," said Cossim. "An American knows no fear," replied Jack. "He sacrificed his life to save another's." "You have lost a friend." "Yes, and one whom I was beginning to like very well. Let us go home. We will fish again to-morrow. There is no chance, I suppose, of recovering the body?" Cossim smiled at the innocence of this question. "By this time it is in the shark's belly. Those fish do not stop to chew," he said. "What a tomb!" "It saves funeral expenses," observed Cossim, with a quiet chuckle. Jack was deeply shocked. He determined not to fish any more that day. The coolies put out their oars and pulled for the shore. Jack, however, was not discouraged. He intended to try again the next day, and hoped for better luck. When he got to his room in the hotel he found Mr. Mole, Harry and Monday playing poker. "Hello, Jack! What cheer?" cried Harry Girdwood. "Bad! Couldn't get a pearl. Had to come back. Manton Marvel has gone to his last account," replied Jack. "What do you mean?" "A shark got him. I'll tell you how it was."

Jack related the incident in all its grim reality. Harry left off playing. He grieved deeply at the untimely death of the genial young American. They had come to look upon him as one of themselves. Mr. Mole and Monday also expressed their sympathy, but being deeply interested in their game, they kept on. "You'd better be careful if you are going diving," remarked Harry, "we can't afford to lose you." "I am not at all afraid," replied Jack. "Why not, the sharks like white men." "I have taken a precaution. You know the diver's suit I bought in Frisco?" "Perfectly well. What of it?" "Simply this, the man I bought it of gave me a tip." "Taught you a wrinkle, eh?" "Precisely." "What was it?" "Just this: I have only got to soak the suit all night in creosote and no shark will come near me." "Oil of creosote." "That's it. Nothing else. A shark can't stand the smell of it; he'll eat a dead dog, ten days old, but anything creosoted—never," Jack continued. "Then you are shark proof?" "I firmly believe so. With my diver's apparatus, air helmet, tubes and pump, I guess I can stay under water until I have filled my basket, come up, go down and do it again and again." "I shall accompany you." "That is what I want you to do. You know your company is always welcome." "I have a reason for it," said Harry. "Something very special?" asked Jack with a half smile. "Yes, indeed. I fear foul play. You will laugh at me I know if I tell you my suspicions." "No I shan't, Harry. Go ahead, old boy." "You know I was up bright and early this morning, long before you were, to explore the town." "You told me so at breakfast. What else?" "I saw your chief diver Koko at the corner of a street talking to a man who was the very image of—who do you think?" "Give it up. Never was good at riddles." "Try and guess." "Can't," said Jack. "Ask me an easier one." "I will tell you. It was Hunston, or I am very much mistaken," Harry Girdwood replied. "Hunston?" ejaculated Harkaway. "Impossible!" "The man and he were as much alike as two peas." "He is thousands of miles away and has not the remotest idea of where we have gone." "Don't make too sure of that." "But my dear Harry, this is mere midsummer madness," cried Jack; "your eyes must have deceived you." "No. I won't admit that." "An accidental resemblance." "I am very clear sighted." "Who could have told him where we were going?" "Things will leak out somehow, take what precautions you may," replied Harry. "Are you sure it was Hunston?" "I will swear to it." "It must be an hallucination on your part. He is many thousand miles away on the other side of the Pacific." "On the contrary, he is in Colombo—right here close to us, and it means danger." Young Jack stamped his foot impatiently. "Am I always to be haunted by Hunston?" he demanded. "It looks as if it was your fate," answered Harry. "The vendetta—the hereditary feud pursues you." "I wonder what he was talking to Koko about?" "Some new plot, you bet." At this moment an altercation arose between Mr. Mole and Monday. The professor had been losing, and was very angry. "I call you!" exclaimed Monday. "Four aces. What you got in your hand, sah?" Mole threw down four kings. They had been raising one another and betting heavily. "You black fraud!" cried Mole. "Hole on dar! I'm a colored genelman anyway!" retorted Monday. "You had one of those aces up your sleeve!" "Who you talkin' to?" "You! Why you're a daylight robber. You'd hold any man up and skin him to the last cent." "If you say that again I'll pull um nose." "Try it and I'll floor you." Monday got up and made a rush at Mole. The latter, having no weapon of defense at hand, bethought himself of a brilliant idea. Rapidly he took off his wooden leg. With this he smote Monday on the head, knocking him flat on the floor. In a moment Monday was on his feet.

"Golly! this am too much," he exclaimed. "What kind of a pusson you tink I am to stand it?"

"Come on, you black rascal, I'm ready for you," replied Mr. Mole. He brandished his wooden leg in the air.

With a quick movement Monday snatched it from him.

"Now," he said. "You'se got to apologize."

"What for?"

"Mussing my wool with this stick. If you don't take it all back, say your prayers."

Mr. Mole was alarmed.

He thought it best to retract, for without his leg he could not move, and was practically helpless.

"I didn't mean any harm, my good friend," he said.

"Did I have an ace up my sleeve?"

"Certainly not; that was a mistake of mine."

"Are you sorry for knocking um head the way you did?"

"Yes, I apologize; it shan't occur again; give me my timber sap-port."

"Very well. I call it square," replied Monday.

His honor was satisfied.

He restored the wooden leg to the professor who put it on, and walking to a sideboard helped himself to a drink.

Jack's mind was much perturbed at what he had heard.

He was inclined to think that his friend, Harry Girdwood, was mistaken.

Anyhow he was determined to be on his guard.

"Have another game of poker, sah?" asked Monday, addressing Mr. Mole.

"Not with you," replied the professor.

"What's the matter with me?"

"You black cuss, you cheat!"

"At it again, are you? I'll have that leg," threatened Monday. "I can take it off and you daren't move."

"Monday, don't do anything rash."

"That's not me, but you can't fool with this chile."

"I don't want to," said Mole, coaxingly. "But you know you had an ace up your sleeve, in your wool or somewhere."

"No, sah."

"I'll swear it."

"Will you quit? If you don't I shan't be able to keep my hands off you."

"I'm an old man."

"I'se no chicken, but I ain't going to stand no sass or accusation ob cheating from young or old."

"Well, I'll play you another game if you'll take your coat off and play in your shirt sleeves turned up to the elbows."

"That's another insult! Massa Jack, what am I going to do with this old image?"

"I don't know," replied Jack.

"He's a sight worse than an idol in a Chinese joss house."

"Go out and take a walk."

"Guess that's about the best thing I can do."

"You bet!"

Monday put on his straw hat and took his departure.

Mr. Mole heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"I can breathe freely now that lump of ebony is gone," said he. "I've lost two hundred and fifty dollars to him this morning, and I'll take my oath that he does not play a straight game."

"Better not let him hear you say so, sir," replied Jack.

Now Monday was gone. Mole became valiant.

"Do you think I care a snap of the fingers for a nigger?" he asked.

"I don't suppose you do."

"I'm a white man I hope. Let us have a small bottle and drive dull care away."

"We will. I feel bad about the sad death of Manton Marvel—poor chap, and can't get over it."

"Ah," exclaimed Mole, "that may be your fate to-morrow if you are going to brave the perils of pearl diving."

He spoke in a sententious manner.

"Don't croak like a raven," said Jack.

"The greed for gold in these days is awful. I don't want to be a Cassandra and speak with prophetic voice, but evil will come of it. You are an old pupil of mine."

"Yes, sir, as my father was before me."

"To even know a well informed man like me," answered Mole, com-bastically, "is a liberal education."

"I admit that to your credit."

"Gray tells us in his eligy, that many a gem of purest ray serene, the unfathomed caves of ocean bear."

"And I'm the man to find them."

"Beware of sharks!"

"Yes," said Harry, "and I will supplement the remark of the pro-fessor, look out for land sharke, too!"

"Pshaw! he can hold his own on land."

"Go gently, sir; Hunston is here," replied Harry Girdwood.

"Der teuffel! You don't say so?"

"I've seen him, but Jack is such a skeptical doubting Thomas, that he won't believe me."

"I can't possibly do it," replied Jack.

"Why not?"

"It seems simply incredible!"

"All right; you will find out in time!"

The conversation ended there.

The day soon passed, and they looked forward to the adventures of the next day.

But not without some apprehension.

Harry had accompanied Jack in most of his excursions, and he re-solved to do so in this, for he felt he was in danger.

The new diving suit Jack had bought was put on board the boat.

There was no protection for the limbs or the body.

That would have been useless.

Nothing can protect a man against the prodigious power of a shark's jaw.

Even ironclad limbs and body would be useless.

The great thing in the apparatus was a waterproof suit lined with lead, well adapted for sinking, a helmet with a tube to admit air pumped down from above, and an electric light on the top.

It was a clever and convenient contrivance.

They started after breakfast for the reef.

Cossim, Koko and Syed were, as usual, in the boat.

There was no room for Monday and Mole, so they remained at the hotel to play cards and squabble.

When the reef was arrived at, Jack put on the helmet, the rope was adjusted under his arms and he was supplied with a basket and a knife.

They lowered him over the side of the boat, and he went down like a shot.

His adventure was different from the mode of procedure of the na-tive divers.

Having no breathing apparatus or air-pump they could not stay under water more than two hundred seconds.

Even that ordeal exhausted them to a considerable extent.

They had to lay off for a quarter of an hour before they could dive again.

Jack, on the contrary, could remain below just as long as they sup-plied him with air.

But cut off that supply and he was done for.

They saw him land on the reef and begin groping about for the pearl bearing oysters.

The two coolies, for whose services there was no use now, were ly-ing in the bow of the boat.

Like all orientals they loved to bask in the sun.

Cossim placidly smoked a cigar, Koko and Syed stood by the wind-lass.

Harry Girdwood worked the air-pump.

The air was dead calm, not a ripple disturbed the unruffled surface of the ocean.

With tropical severity the perpendicular rays of the sun shot down.

Jack was very busy filling his basket.

Feeling overcome with the heat, Harry said to Koko: "Take a turn at this air-pump handle."

"Si sahib," replied Koko.

"I must have a rest. This heat is prostrating. Keep it going."

"Trust me, sahib. Me very reliable. Everybody knows me in Colombo."

"Do they know any good about you?"

"Good Cingalese Hindoo, Buddhist, married, wife and nine children."

"That's your recommendation, eh?" replied Harry.

"If not situated like that, not be a pearl diver," answered Koko; "too much risk from shark."

Harry gave him the handle which worked a crank, connected with an india rubber tube.

The tube carried the air down through the water to the diver's helmet and was attached to a nozzle.

It was easy enough to unscrew it.

If this was done, the wearer of the helmet would be deprived of air and soon perish.

Harry Girdwood sat down on a thwart and mopped the perspiration from his heated brow with a bandana handkerchief.

The sultry weather made the heat intense.

All the time Harry kept his eyes fixed on Koko.

As we know he had his suspicions of this worthy.

Suddenly he noticed that while pumping air with one hand, he was unscrewing the tube from the nozzle with the other.

This was a distinct act of treachery.

After all his suspicions were correct.

In a moment he was on his feet, and seizing Koko by the throat with a strangling grip, he threw him down.

"Hold him tight," he shouted.

Cossim promptly did so.

Going to the pump Harry began to work it again.

At this crisis Jack jerked the rope as a signal that he wanted to be pulled up.

Syed set the windlass going.

There were no sharks about that day as the tide was very low and they could not get over the bar.

Koko did not attempt to struggle as Cossim who was loyal to his employer, held him in an iron grip.

Up came Jack. He was hauled into the boat by Harry and Syed, divested of his helmet, and enabled to look round.

He saw Koko on his back with Cossim bending over him.

It appeared singular.

Not at all could he make it out.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"He is a traitor as I told you," replied Harry; "I caught him in the act of detaching the tube so as to deprive you of air."

"Is that a fact?"

"You can believe me. I am not subject to hallucinations."

"What did you do?"

"Knocked him down with a body blow and told Cossim to hold him till you came up."

"Let him go. I will question him," said Jack with a thoughtful look.

Koko was released and rose looking very foolish.

"Why did you make an attempt on my life?" asked Jack severely.

"All a mistake, sahib," whined Koko.

"My friend asserts it, and I would rather believe him than you. Speak out, or you will be handed over to the police!"

"If I tell the truth will you let me go free?" asked the diver.

Koko was intimidated.

"Tell the truth," said Jack.

"Si, sahib; my head is yours if I don't."

They regarded him curiously while he spoke.

His story was to this effect: A white man had waylaid him on the street.

He had given him money to suffocate Jack by disconnecting the tube, and promised him more if he was successful.

The description of the man answered perfectly to that of Hunston.

"You were right, Harry. My relentless enemy is on my track," said Jack.

"You must foil him."

"Yes, we will baffle him yet. Let us look now at my catch. I am just crazy to see what I have got."

The oysters were opened.

When one was opened a cry of surprise and delight broke from Cossim.

"Sahib—sahib!" he exclaimed. "Look here—a big pink pearl! The wonder of the world!"

He held up the shell.

There was the pearl—a beauty—the largest on record.

Young Jack had found a prize.

The pearl that Jack had brought up from the depths of the ocean was a great prize.

It was nearly the size of a pigeon's egg.

He took it from the shell and held it in the palm of his hand.

"I think I may fairly claim this as my own, as I brought it up," he said; "how much do you guess it is worth?"

"I should estimate it at a quarter of a million dollars, market price," replied Cossim.

"Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars?"

"Exactly."

"It was worth diving for. What would the fancy price be?"

"That depends. If you got a purchaser after that sort of gem it would be a good deal more."

"I am satisfied with the day's work."

"You won't go down any more?"

"Not to-day. It would be tempting Providence. The sharks might come up."

"You have had one narrow escape of your life, Sahib. That fellow Koko shall never more be servant of mine."

"I should think not," replied Jack.

"He is a villain," said Cossim. "I hope you don't implicate me in his rascality."

"Not at all. I acquit you of complicity."

"Thank you. Let every tub stand on its own bottom."

"I am quite willing to agree to that."

Jack put the beautiful pearl in his pocket.

He was very much pleased to think that he had got it.

A gem like that was a fortune in itself.

If his luck continued he would soon be a millionaire.

His mind was only disturbed by the presence of Hunston in Colombo.

Was he never to be freed from that man?

As for Koko, he had forgiven him after his confession.

The poor uneducated pearl diver was only a tool in the hands of another.

"I should not try my luck again for awhile," said Harry Girdwood.

"Leave well alone."

"What shall I do with myself?" Jack asked. "I am just beginning to like this island."

"Drive about; the environs I hear are charming."

"Soon get tired of that, but I don't want to go home yet."

Cossim interposed.

"There is the interior, sahib," he exclaimed. "Vast, grand, tropical, a jungle; hunt big game."

"What have you got, tigers?"

"No, sahib; go to India for them. All we have got is elephants and big snakes, pythons."

"I bar those—can't bear serpents, but I wouldn't mind having a shy at the elephantine creatures."

"You can easily do that."

"It would be nice to take back a lot of ivory tusks. Do you know where to find the elephants?"

"Very well. No man better. Syed and I have often been out hunting."

"Successfully?" Jack inquired.

"Pretty fairly so," answered Cossim. "Ivory fetches a good price; it is worth the risk."

"I will take it on," said Jack. "We will see if we cannot soak some of these pachydermatous mammoths. What is the equipment?"

"A tent, camp equipage, an elephant rifle with explosive shell bullets."

"Will you come, Harry?"

"Why, certainly; it is always a game of follow my leader between you and I," was the reply.

"Agreed. Mole must stop at the hotel. We will take Monday to look after the commissariate."

"Mole won't stay home. He is sure to go where we go!"

"We shall have a tame elephant to carry things and act as a decoy."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, sahib. The gentlemen can ride on that. Sit in howdah, you know," said Cossim.

A little more conversation settled the whole thing.

The expedition was arranged.

Cossim stated that the elephant grounds were thirty miles off.

It was a difficult country to get through.

Yet he did not reckon it would be more than one day's journey if they started early.

He promised to have everything in readiness by six o'clock the next morning.

The coolies bent to their oars, and the boat soon reached the landing.

"Now Koko," exclaimed Cossim, "you've got to go and get employment elsewhere. I will never engage you in pearl diving again. You have played it very low down on him, and I don't like you for it. Go! Seek employment! Mr. Harkaway is very kind to let you off as easily as he has done."

Koko slunk away on the stone steps and disappeared without saying a word.

Nobody knew what he was going to do.

Perhaps he had some deep design in his head.

It was not at all improbable that he was going to see Hunston, tell him what was going on, and receive fresh instructions from the enemy.

That was what Jack thought.

Yet he did not think it worth while to put him under arrest.

"I can fight Hunston," said Jack to Harry. "He doesn't worry me a little bit."

"But he fights in the dark. He's like a snake in the grass," replied Harry.

"That is the worst of it. I would rather battle in the daylight."

"Precisely. You never know where to find the fellow or know what he is going to do."

"That is a fact. All the same I am not afraid of him," replied Jack.

When they got back to the hotel they found Mole and Monday playing cards and quarreling as usual.

"Jack, my dear boy, lend me some money," exclaimed Mole. "I'm dead broke. This black skunk gets the best of me every time."

"Remember, sir, Polonius' advice to his son, in Hamlet, 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be!'"

"That's it," replied Jack. "Not a cent do you get out of me."

"Please yourself! I'll play with him no more!"

"A good resolution. Keep it."

Mr. Mole poured himself out a glass of wine.

"Ede, bibe, lude!" he exclaimed.

"What's that, sah?" asked Monday. "I don't understand Dutch, not much."

"You ignorant cuss, that's Latin! It means eat, drink and be merry."

"For to-morrow you die!"

"It may be so—it may be so, but I don't want to pass in my checks yet. Life is sweet, and I'm not tired of the job. Lend me a quarter, Jack, and I'll try this specimen of humanity again."

"No, sir! I never encourage gambling."

"You are nearly a millionaire, and I'm a pauper. How did you pan out to-day?"

Young Jack showed him the pearl.

"My word!" cried Mole, "what a beauty! How lucky you are to be sure!"

"First in love, first in war and first in the hearts of everybody," said Girdwood.

"Thank you, Harry; do you want to borrow anything?" asked Jack, with a smile.

"I mean it."

"In all sincerity?"

"Ask yourself. We are more than brothers. Call us tried friends," answered Harry.

"I congratulate you," said Mole to Jack. "Fortune smiles and sheds her favors on you."

"Not altogether."

"How is that?"

"Hunston is in this city. That is what worries me," replied Jack.

"Again! Hunston here?"

"Most decidedly. I know it as a fact."

"That man is ever on your path."

"It is a fatality. There will be no peace till either he or I are dead."

"By Jove, it must not be you!"

"He hired one of my pearl divers to kill me this morning. Koko, you know him."

"Perfectly well. Cossim's employee."

"How you stand this eternal persecution I don't know," exclaimed Mole.

"Can I avoid it. I had a narrow escape. What will happen next I don't pretend to imagine."

"Shoot him!"

"The law will not allow me to do so."

"Have him arrested."

"I cannot. He stabs in the dark and I have no proof of his villainy, but I shall get out of his way. I am going elephant hunting to-morrow in the interior."

"Mind he doesn't follow you."

"I don't think he can do that," replied Jack. "To-morrow the jungle, the big elephants and the large snakes that make ambition virtue."

"Quotation from Shakespeare slightly paraphrased. Count me out. I will play golf."

"Where are your links?"

"In the garden of the hotel. I have mapped them out. In the meanwhile if you will come with me, friend Monday, we will take a stroll about the town."

"And I shall have to blow you off, sah," said Monday.

"Why not? You have cheated me out of all my money."

"Fair winnings, sah!"

"Oh, yes," said Jack, "Monday is always on the level."

"I don't know so much about that. You may have your opinion. I have mine."

"Never mind, sah. I put up for the drinks," replied Monday. "If we go into some of the dives we may see Massa Hunston."

"The Lord forbid!"

"Are you skeared of him?"

"I want to keep away from that fellow."

Monday's face flushed.

"Not me!" he cried. "I'd like to cut his throat!"

All the savage instinct of his race flashed through his dark eyes.

But he only spoke in the interest of his master, whose cause he espoused.

"None of that, Monday!" exclaimed Jack. "We will fight fair if Hunston fights foul."

"I don't want to see you hurted, Mast' Jack. Your father tole me to take care of you."

"Thank you, I can take care of myself, and don't want any one's interference."

"No offense meant, sah."

"I don't take it that way—make your mind easy. You and Mr. Mole are going out for a stroll."

"Yes, sah."

"If you see anything of Hunston let me know. Act the part of private detectives and let me know all you can."

"Depend upon that, Jack," replied the professor. "I daresay you are aware, as a matter of dry fact in natural history, that moles are blind in the light."

"Yes, sir."

"But they can see in the dark."

"Exactly; they work underground."

"You bet I will find out something," said Mole. "I will a tale unfold that will make your flesh creep and freeze your blood—no fear."

Jack laughed. Mole and Monday left the hotel together and walked about.

"They can go elephant hunting for all I care," said Mole. "They don't rope me in. I'm not going to have my leg pulled on elephants, and don't you forget it."

"I'll have to take care of Mast' Jack, sah."

"You've two legs and I have not. That makes the difference. Suppose a bolipant—I mean an elephant, was to go for me. Where should I be?"

"Up a tree."

"I couldn't climb it. The mad, infuriated animal would trample me under his feet or gore me with his tusks."

"Serve you right, too."

"Monday, I thought you were my friend?"

"So I am, sah, so long as you don't accuse me ob cheatin' at poker. No colored gentleman do that."

"There is always an exception to every rule."

"You won't give in?" said Monday.

"No. I'll die first."

"Do you want me to bust you in the street?"

"I deprecate violence at any time," replied Mole. "It is contrary to the laws of civilization. I will not be busted, as you vulgarly express it."

"Keep your mouth shut, then."

"Look at that sign over the street. Free chicken broth. Free billiards."

"That is the place for us."

"Shall we enter?"

"I guess we can't do better," said Monday.

The restaurant was called the "Travelers' Rest," and did not appear of the highest class.

Yet it attracted their attention and they went inside.

Seated at a table were Hunston, Martin and Koko.

They looked up directly they saw Mole and Monday.

"Sol!" exclaimed Mole. "You are here. I have found you at last."

"What have you to do with me?" demanded Hunston, fiercely.

"You know me, don't you?"

"I ought to. You are one of the Harkaway crowd. Didn't I bury you alive in the Land of Fire?"

"You won't do that again."

"How do you know? It's more than you can tell."

"You are plotting here against young Jack," said Mole; "that native, Koko, who is by your side, tried to kill him this very day."

"Good job if he had succeeded."

"I don't think so."

"Who cares about your opinion, you old fool?"

"Don't call me that!"

"I shall apply to you any epithet I like," said Hunston. "If you don't want to hear it you'd better clear out."

"Not at your dictation."

"If you don't I'll make you."

"Take a rest. Who are you talking to? I'm a man of the world as much as you are."

"I should call you a double distilled idiot from all I have heard about you."

"And I apostrophise you as a double bareled rogue, a liar and a horse thief."

Hunston rose and faced Mole.

"You insult me like that, do you?" he cried.

"Yes, and I'll do it again."

"Not much, you won't."

Raising his fist, Hunston knocked the old man down.

He fell upon his back on the floor.

"Coward!" shouted Monday, "this chile gib it to you."

Drawing his knife, he stabbed Hunston in the shoulder.

The latter grappled him by the throat with his left hand.

A brief struggle ensued and Hunston was hurled into a corner of the room.

His head struck the skirting and he became insensible.

"That will teach you a lesson," said Monday.

Martin made a rush for the door and got out.

So did Koko.

Monday, however, captured him.

"Not so fast," he said, dragging him to a seat.

Mr. Mole had recovered himself.

He got up.

"That's right," he said, "hold him, we will interrogate the dusky skinned son of the soil."

"Yes, sah."

"He shall tell us all he knows, and what he is here for."

"That is what I mean him to do, Massa Mole!"

"Hunston is settled for a time. Martin has bolted."

Koko sat perfectly still.

The saloon was empty, only the proprietor being behind the bar.

He was afraid to interfere.

"Now, Koko," continued Monday, "you've got to speak right up; if you don't there will be ructions!"

"I've nothing to tell," replied Koko.

"Golly, I'll make you talk!"

Monday threatened him with the knife.

"Don't cut me," said Koko.

"I'll do more than that! I'll carve you," answered Monday. "What you and Hunston talking about?"

Koko was completely subdued.

He thought his life was not safe and gave in.

"Me talk about Massa Harkaway's elephant hunt," he said, "and he ask me to go along and kill him somehow."

"Is that all?"

"I have nothing more to say, sah!"

"It is enough," interposed Mole. "You can see there is mischief brewing!"

"Anyway, Hunston is out of it."

"For the present."

"We must go back and warn Harkaway, though he is so daring that I am afraid anything I say to him will be of no use."

"He will have his own way," replied Monday—"jes' the same as his father."

They walked to the bar, had something to drink, and explained to the proprietor why Hunston had been attacked.

"It is no matter of mine," replied he. "They stay in my house and pay their way—that is all I know."

Mole and Monday retired.

They were anxious to put young Jack on his guard.

No sooner had they gone than Martin darted into the saloon.

He had been hiding round the corner.

Giving Hunston a restorative, he soon brought him to consciousness.

Koko was still there.

The wound in Hunston's arm was not severe.

Obtaining some pieces of rag, Martin bound it up, and when the bleeding stopped he felt better.

"Curse it!" exclaimed Hunston; "what did those fellows want to come in here for?"

"It was chance," replied Martin; "a mere matter of accident—nothing else."

"They have discovered my plans."

"Will that make any difference?"

"I don't know that it will," said Hunston, thoughtfully; "but Koko is of no further use."

"They will know him."

"Of course; he will be spotted in a moment. I must employ someone else to execute my plot."

"In the jungle young Jack will be an easy prey."

"Why certainly; I want to make him a captive and have the pleasure of killing him myself," exclaimed Hunston.

"I know the man who is going with the sahib," said Koko, suddenly.

"You mean Cossim?"

"No; Cossim goes as a guide, Syed as help. This man lives in the jungle principally. He knows the elephants. He tames them and can do what he likes with them."

"Where is he now?" inquired Hunston.

"Right here in this city of Colombo."

"I should like to see him."

"He is a friend of mine and will be here presently," answered Koko.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sahib. His name is Mahmond. I tell you he passes half his time in the jungle. He kills elephants and sells the tusks. In the jungle he has a hut where he lives."

"By himself?"

"No; he has one friend, which is a huge python he has tamed."

"A snake?"

"One of the largest. It will coil round his body and not hurt him."

"Mahmond must be a wonderful man."

"He is. To-day he is in this city. He rides on a tame elephant. Cossim has engaged him for the Harkaway Sahib," continued Koko.

At this moment the door opened.

A tall, muscular, middle-aged Cingalese entered.

It was Mahmond, the elephant hunter, tamer of snakes, and dweller in the jungle.

The proprietor of the saloon was a Chinaman of the name of Hi Lung.

He knew Mahmond well, for he was a frequent customer at his place when in the city.

Mahmond was an opium smoker.

Inside there was an elegantly furnished parlor with lounges to lie on.

"I want to hit the joint," said Mahmond.

"Go inside," said Hi Lung.

"It isn't often I come to the city. When I do, I want to lay off and enjoy myself."

"The room is empty—you can have it all to yourself."

"Very good; I desire nothing more."

"How is your health?"

"Tiptop; I never felt better."

"That's all right," said Hi Lung; "go inside and have a good time."

"That is what I mean to do."

"You're a good judge."

"None better."

Mahmond was going into the inner room frequented by the opium smoker.

Koko spoke to him.

"Just a moment," he exclaimed. "I wish to introduce you to a friend of mine, Mr. Hunston, who may put some money in your way."

"I am glad to meet him," was the reply, "and I hope we shall always be good friends."

"I trust so," answered Hunston.

They shook hands.

Mahmond went to the counter, took a slice of bread and sprinkled some salt on it.

"Eat," he said.

Hunston did as he was told.

"Now," continued Mahmond, "we have eaten bread and salt together in the Eastern fashion."

"What does that mean?"

"It is a bond of fellowship."

"I want to speak to you before you hit the pipe."

"With pleasure. You are welcome. Walk into the adjoining room with me, where I seek dreams and sweet oblivion."

He alluded to the effects of opium smoking.

Leading the way, Hunston followed him.

The apartment was elegantly furnished, pipes were placed on a table for any one to help himself, and luxurious lounges invited repose.

The curtains of the windows were drawn down, but a couple of lamps shed a dim religious light on the scene.

They sat down side by side.

"What is it you have to say to me?" Mahmond asked.

"Will a thousand dollars be of use to you?" said Hunston.

"Sahib, I never refuse money, I save it, put it in the bank. I kill the elephants and sell the ivory tusks."

"You must be rich."

"I am not poor. It is true I live in the jungle in my little hut. Some day I shall come to this city and dwell in one of the big hotels."

"Is that your ambition?"

"Sure, then I shall take to myself a beautiful woman for a wife and make life worth living."

"Take this," continued Hunston, handing the elephant hunter a bill for the amount he had mentioned.

"I accept your donation. What am I to do for it?"

"You are going into the jungle with Harkaway who is a guest at the hotel of all nations."

"He rides on my tame elephant into the jungle to-morrow. I am engaged by Cossim, the pearl fisher."

"Who goes with him?"

"Mr. Girdwood, a colored man named Monday and my friend Cossim."

"I have no animosity against Girdwood or Monday, but Harkaway is my deadly foe, and it is my wish that he should not come back from this hunting expedition."

"You want him killed?"

"It is my desire to kill him myself if you can make him a prisoner in your hut and come for me."

"I understand," answered Mahmond.

"Will you do it?"

"Rely on my best endeavors."

"When shall I expect you?" inquired Hunston.

"I will meet you here in five days," replied Mahmond. "You can ride to the jungle on my elephant."

"And you will capture Harkaway?"

"Allah il Allah, have I not promised you? But if I satisfy you the reward must be doubled."

"We will not quarrel about money."

"Consider the matter settled."

Mahmond lighted a pipe and reclined on a couch.

"I have a vice, you see," he remarked.

"I will leave you to indulge it," replied Hunston.

He went away and rejoined Martin.

"Have you settled it?" asked the latter.

"Yes. Mahmond is going to make young Jack a prisoner in his hut in the jungle."

"That's good!"

"In five days he will come for me with his tame elephant, and you and I can ride in the howdah."

"Do you mean to murder him yourself?"

"This time I shall. You heard what Koko said about his finding the big pearl worth a hundred thousand dollars. He is sure to carry that about with him for safety."

"You want it?"

"I mean to have his life and the prize pearl too," exclaimed Hunston.

"Good move; push it along," said Martin.

The plot was carefully prepared.

We shall see how it succeeded.

CHAPTER II.

THE ELEPHANT HUNT—IN THE JUNGLE—JACK'S DANGER.

WHEN Mr. Mole and Monday returned to the hotel of all nations, they told young Jack and Harry Girdwood what had happened.

"This is very serious," exclaimed Jack. "Hunston will not appear in the open field himself."

"He is a dastardly, despicable coward," cried Harry.

"If I could meet him in the jungle I'd shoot him."

"You won't have the chance."

"Why?"

"He knows better than that. What do you think?"

"The fellow won't face me."

"Certainly not. He hires others to do his deadly work."

"He will have to hustle if he gets the best of us."

"We shall see."

"I am very sorry indeed, Jack, that I cannot accompany and look after you," said Mole.

"Did I ask you, sir?"

"Well, I regard it as a duty. You are young, wild and—hem—slightly headstrong."

"What of that?"

"Nothing much. Still, at my age, and with my leg, I should not be good as an elephant hunter. I have taken a turn of mind for literary work."

"What are you going to write, sir?"

"A life of Moses, the great Jew, who led the Israelites out of the land of bondage in Egypt into the land of Canaan across the Red Sea," replied Mole.

"Where are you going to get your facts from?"

"Out of the Bible—the Old Testament—and rely on my vivid imagination for the rest."

"It will have to be remarkably vivid. Where will you begin?"

"In the bullrushes on the Nile River. Moses was found there as an infant by Pharaoh's daughter."

"I'm thinking of the elephant rushes to-morrow."

"Don't joke. Moses was a great man, and I'm going to write him up."

"How much is he going to pay you for it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Doesn't he keep a second hand clothing store on Baxter street or somewhere around the Five Points?"

"Jack," said Mole, solemnly, "you are incorrigible!"

"The Harkaway's always were."

"I ought to know; I have brought up two generations."

"What do you think of them?"

"Well," replied Mole, "I respect the family, but I don't take much stock in you!"

"How is that?"

"You have been warned, and yet you are foolhardy enough to go elephant hunting, when your great and determined enemy Hunston is after you hot foot!"

"Never mind; I can hold my own!"

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it, because I have confidence in myself," replied Jack.

"Give us some more about Moses."

"He was one of the greatest men that ever lived. Pharoah's daughter found him——"

"We have heard that before," interrupted Jack.

"He was brought up——"

"On bullrushes."

"Don't chaff. In the palace of the king he was educated."

"It's a pity he wasn't your pupil."

"Will you be quiet, Jack?" said Mole.

"When you are."

"You are ruffling my feathers and stroking the fur the wrong way."

"We don't want to know all this ancient history."

"Hang it all, am I a white man or not?"

"Presumably you are."

"Have I no rights you are bound to respect?"

"Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar," replied Jack, laughing.

"Bosh!" cried Mole, who was irritated. "As I was about to tell you—Moses learned to beat the sorcerers and magicians at their own game."

"Is this a fairy tale, sir?"

"Do hush up. You are the worst in the world to spoil a story. Moses——"

"Still harping on the same string?"

"Moses——"

"We've heard of him. Can't you throw Aaron in as a comic relief?"

"It would be a relief if you'd keep your mouth shut."

"Can't do it, sir. I was born with it open."

"More's the trouble. You ought to be a stump orator," said the professor.

"How about yourself?"

"I was born to adorn the academic desk and teach the young idea how to shoot."

"Is that when the rising generation hold up a man and present a revolver at his head?"

"You misconstrue all my remarks. Moses found that his people, the Israelites, were slaves in the hands of the Egyptians, making bricks without straw and building useless pyramids. He nobly determined to deliver them out of the house of bondage."

"Was that the first kind of clearing house?"

"Keep up your harlequinade. It don't hurt me in the least."

"Glad to hear that."

"Then came the passover."

"Let us pass over that," said Jack.

"Subsequently he moved the children of Israel across the Red Sea like a lot of Boers into a Transvaal called Canaan," Mole continued.

"You're a back number."

"Don't call me down. I'm as much up to date as you are," cried Mole, indignantly. "The great lawgiver——"

"Oh, bother Moses. Give us a rest on him."

"He tapped the rock and water flowed."

"You like a little whisky in yours, don't you?"

"Happy thought. Talking is dry work."

"To be continued in our next."

"Moses," began Mole.

"Confound it, will you leave off? Give this man a drink, Monday, or club him."

"He's wound up for twenty-four hours, Massa Jack. The works don't want no oiling."

Saying this Monday provided Mr. Mole with some liquid refreshment. His eloquent discourse on the biography of Moses was cut short by the entrance of Cossim and Mahmond.

"This is Mahmond Sahib," said Cossim, "he lives chiefly in the jungle, and understands more about elephants than any other man in this country."

"I am glad to know him," replied Jack.

"Salaam Alikoom," said Mahmond, bowing respectfully, "I have my tame elephant here, his name is Tippoo. There is room for two in the howdah. How many are going?"

"Myself and Mr. Girdwood. I thought of taking my servant, Monday, along."

"He can walk with me."

"Very good. We will arrange it so."

"To-morrow at what time will you be in readiness?"

"Say five o'clock. Dawn will break then. It is easier to travel in the cool than at noontide. The elephant Tippoo will carry your tent and provisions."

"See to it all. Buy all you deem necessary."

"I will do so, sahib," answered Mahmond.

"An excellent man; very reliable," whispered Cossim. "He will show you good sport."

"I hope so."

"There is no doubt about it."

The two men bowed and retired.

Everything was arranged for an early start in the morning.

Young Jack and Harry were looking forward to their first elephant hunt.

They slept little that night.

At the time appointed Mahmond was at the door of the hotel with his elephant Tippoo.

Mr. Mole was up bright and early to see them off.

He had been indulging in his matutinal cocktail, and was in a talkative humor.

"I wish you every success in your great elephant hunt, Jack," he said, "bring me back a tusk. I will have a pipe made out of it. An ivory pipe would be a novelty."

"You shall have one, sir," replied Jack.

"During your absence I will go on with my life of Moses; you remember he erected the brazen serpent."

"I wish they were all made of brass where I am going."

"Are you afraid of snakes?"

"Can't bear the sight of them."

"There was one in the garden of Eden. Snakes figure largely in biblical history. Moses——"

"Haven't you done with him yet," asked Jack.

"I am only just beginning to get up my facts; it will take me six months to write this book."

"What are you going to call it?"

"A life of Moses by Professor Mole, M. A.; that being interpreted means, master of arts."

"What particular art may I venture to inquire, drinking?"

"Jack," said Mole, "you are too hard on an old man; if I do take a drop occasionally, it is only because my system requires it, and the doctors have told me to do so. You must obey the orders of your physician."

"Where do you expect to go when you die?"

"To heaven I hope."

"More likely to the land of liars."

"You are rude, Jack. Moses would not have made a remark like that," Mole protested, "he wasn't that kind of a man. It is true he did not enter the promised land. I may not go to heaven, but if I do I don't expect to meet you there."

Harry Girdwood could not refrain from laughing.

"The old man had you there," he exclaimed, as he climbed into the howdah, as the seat on the elephant is called.

Jack followed him.

"Say," continued Mole, "you might try and think out the Mosaic era while you are away."

"What for?" asked Jack.

"To give me a few pointers when you come back. I want to know his Christian name."

"Call him Abraham."

"That might do, but my theory is that as he was brought up in an Egyptian palace, he must have had an Egyptian name. I also wonder what color his hair was. Do you think he had red hair?"

"Who ever heard of a red Jew?"

"I will put him down as black; the Hebrews are swarthy. Thank you for the hint. Good luck to you."

"Good bye, sir."

"Don't forget my tusk."

"I will bring back a cartload."

Mahmond spoke to the elephant.

"Get along, Tippoo," he said; "make things lively!"

The huge beast, heavily loaded as he was, stepped out at a good pace.

Monday and Mahmond followed behind.

"Old Mole is getting a bit daft," remarked Harry.

"He's got Moses on the brain," replied Jack.

"That's a new kind of disease, isn't it?"

"Very much so!"

They soon left the town. The road was good for some miles. Riding on an elephant they found pleasant.

The motion was easy, and the howdah comfortable.

At length the road ceased. They crossed an open plain and came to the jungle.

Mahmond guided them through a well-beaten track, until they arrived at a clearing.

The jungle had been burnt and the trees cut down.

"We will pitch the tent here, sahib," exclaimed Mahmond. "We are in the heart of the elephant's haunt now."

He pointed to a spring that welled up from the ground.

"That is where they come to drink," he added.

The imprints of their hoofs were to be seen on the ground.

Alighting from the howdah, Jack and Harry assisted Monday and Mahmond to erect the tent.

This was quickly done.

The cooking utensils were got out of a bag, canned meats spread out, and a spirit stove lighted to boil the kettle for tea.

"Where do you live?" asked Jack.

"About a mile from here. My hut is in the jungle," replied Mahmond. "I will show you to-morrow."

A cloth was spread on the ground. They sat down and enjoyed a hearty meal.

The tea, for which Ceylon was famous, they found very refreshing.

Suddenly Tippoo began to make a great noise, which is called trumpeting.

Jack sprang to his feet and seized his rifle.

Harry did the same thing.

"Elephants coming," said Mahmond. "Tippoo knows it."

"Are you sure?" asked Jack.

"Certain, sahib. They want water. It is their time just before sundown."

"Are they so regular in their habits?"

"Only drink once a day."

Presently there was a sound of broken boughs, and two huge elephants appeared upon the scene.

Instantly Jack and Harry fired with their repeating rifles.

It took six shots to bring down the elephants.

"You've done it, Mast' Jack!" cried Monday.

"I think I had something to do with it," said Harry.

"That quite true, sah—you both in it."

They were old animals, but they had splendid tusks.

Monday and Mahmood proceeded to cut them out.

They were regarded as trophies.

"Not bad for a beginning," exclaimed Jack.

"Go into the jungle in the morning," said Mahmood.

No more elephants appeared that night.

At an early hour they all retired to rest; Monday and Mahmood sleeping on the ground outside the tent.

Wrapped up in blankets they were very warm and comfortable indeed.

In the morning they woke up at daylight.

Harry Girdwood tried to rise, but fell back again.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Jack, in alarm.

"I don't know," replied Harry. "My head swims and I have lost the use of my legs."

"Can't you get up?"

"It is impossible. I have tried but am completely helpless."

"That is queer."

Saying this Jack called Mahmood into the tent.

He described Harry's symptoms to him.

"The sahib has got the jungle fever," he said. "It is very common here and takes you all of a sudden."

"What is good for it?"

"Quinine. Fortunately I have some."

"Is it dangerous?"

"Oh, no! It will last for three days and leave him weak. It is not a fatal disease. The malaria from the ground brings it on."

Mahmood procured a glass of water in which he stirred a strong dose of quinine.

This he gave to Harry, who drank it with a feverish thirst.

"We shall soon have him all right and well again," he said.

"Thank God for that!" exclaimed Jack. "Shall I stay by you, Harry?"

"No—don't think of it," answered Girdwood. "Monday can attend to me."

"I was going on an elephant hunt."

"You need not postpone it on my account."

"Very well; if you think you are all right I will go."

"Do so and I shall be pleased."

It was arranged that Monday should stay and wait upon the invalid, while Jack and Mahmood went into the jungle.

This was just what the treacherous villain wanted.

It was his desire to have Jack alone.

He was anxious to carry out his compact with Hunston.

Now was his opportunity.

Young Jack and he made a hasty breakfast, and with their rifles penetrated into the jungle.

The heat was very oppressive, almost prostrating.

They succeeded in killing an elephant about a year old, with small tusks.

Mahmood proposed that they should go to his hut and rest for awhile.

Jack was glad of the chance.

Soon the noon tide would be over, when the heat of the sun would decline.

The hunter carried with him a basket of food and some water in a canteen.

Amidst some rocks jutting out of the earth was the hut in which Mahmood lived.

It was roughly and rudely constructed, but quite habitable in a warm climate.

It might be compared with a log cabin.

They entered, put down their rifles, and Mahmood spread out their repast.

Not for a moment had Jack any suspicion about his guide.

He trusted him implicitly.

If any one had told him that he was in Hunston's pay he would not have believed it.

All at once Mahmood struck Jack a blow on the head with his fist and stretched him on the floor.

It was a cowardly blow.

The young man was taken completely unawares.

Before he could recover himself and rise Mahmood, with a piece of rope, bound his hands and feet.

He was betrayed, captured and helpless.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, angrily.

"I am paid to do it," replied Mahmood, calmly.

"By whom?"

"Your implacable enemy, the sahib Hunston."

Jack saw it all in a moment.

He had fallen unsuspectingly into a trap.

What was to be the end of it?

That he could not divine for a moment, though he thought his life was safe.

If he had wanted to Mahmood could easily have murdered him.

Nothing was more simple.

A knife or a bullet would have done the work in an instant.

"Hunston again," said Jack; "shall I never get rid of him? He is my curse."

"He will be here to-morrow," answered Mahmood. "I shall ride to-night on my elephant and bring him back with me."

"What for?"

"The sahib wants to have the pleasure of killing you by his own hand."

Jack shuddered.

He was brave enough, but what he heard entirely unnerved him.

A terrible fate was his.

Harry Girdwood was prostrated with jungle fever.

Who could help him?

There was no one but Monday, and this faithful follower did not know where to find him.

The prospect was gloomy in the extreme.

Jack did not see the way out of this crisis in his life.

"Am I to lie here bound like this for twenty-four hours?" he inquired.

"It may be less than that, for I shall make haste," Mahmood replied.

"The mosquitoes will eat me up. They are making a meal of me already."

"It cannot be helped."

"You will have to go back to the camp for your tame elephant. What are you going to tell my friends?"

"That you were killed by a snake."

"Do you think they will believe a lie of that sort?"

"Yes," replied Mahmood. "Farewell. Your agony will soon be over."

With these words Mahmood left him and hurriedly made his way back to the tent.

Jack was left alone with the horror of thirst creeping upon him.

What a terrible night was in prospect!

When the Hindoo reached the camp he found Monday giving Harry Girdwood some beef tea.

"Allah be merciful!" he cried. "Woe, great and unutterable has befallen us!"

"What has happened?" asked Harry faintly.

"I scarcely dare tell you. Yet my tongue must not be tied, sahib."

"Where is Harkaway?"

"Gone to the land of spirits."

"Dead!" ejaculated Harry with a sinking of the heart.

"A poisonous snake bit him. He is no more."

"Where have you left his body?"

"In the jungle where he fell."

"Would to Heaven I were well and strong enough to see into this! I believe you to be a traitor."

"No, sahib; I am the best friend you ever had. You are sick. I shall mount my elephant and go to the city to fetch a doctor for you."

"I thought you said my illness would only last three days?" replied Harry.

"You are worse than I imagined. I see it in your face. By Allah, you must have medical advice. I will go and lose no time."

He went out of the tent, got on Tippoo, who had enjoyed a good rest, and started for Colombo.

The sun was just beginning to decline.

"I think that man's done something to Mast' Jack!" exclaimed Monday, when the Hindoo was gone.

"So do I," said Harry. "It is my opinion we shall not see him again."

"I am of the same mind. He hasn't gone for a doctor."

"Not he. The rascal has skipped."

"There is no moon, and it's no use going into the jungle in the dark," continued Monday; "but if you can spare me to-morrow, sah, I will be off at daylight and hunt for Mast' Jack—find him body anyway. This thing am awful!"

"It knocks me out of time altogether. Poor, dear Jack!"

"I feel as if I could cry my eyes out."

"You can go as soon as the dawn breaks," continued Harry. "I can get along without you."

"All well and good, sah! Then I go," said Monday.

"I can't bring myself to think that Jack is dead after all. Some deep plot is being worked out."

"That is my idea too."

"It will be sad if he is. I shall never get over it. He was talking of going to Bengal in India, tiger hunting. The land of the tigers is not far off."

"That would be bully fun. Me like that," said Monday.

Harry was in a high state of fever. Talking tired him. His head fell back and he went to sleep.

In the morning Monday was as good as his word.

He gave Harry some quinine and placed a jug of water by his side so that he could help himself when he wished to.

Then he started on his journey.

CHAPTER III.

A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED, AND MONDAY PROVES IT.

MONDAY was clear sighted, and watching the ground closely he saw the tracks of Jack's and Mahmond's feet.

These he followed closely with the keenness of a red Indian.

In a short time he came to the spot where the young elephant was killed.

It was still on the ground and some vultures were preying on its body.

From there he branched off in a direct line for the hut. He approached it cautiously.

Looking in at the doorway he perceived Jack lying on his back upon the floor.

"Mast' Jack," he exclaimed; "here I am. Bless de Lord I have found you alive."

"Is that you, Monday?" cried Jack, delightedly. "I am not dead yet, but I could not have stood this much longer. I thought you'd make a search. How did you find me?"

"Followed the tracks, sah," replied Monday, cutting the cords that bound him.

Jack sprang to his feet and stretched himself. Then he took a drink of water.

"A thousand thanks," he said. "I shall never forget this. Where is the traitor Mahmond?"

"Gone to Colombo, Mast Jack. He tell you was killed by a snake. He gone to fetch a doctor for Mast Harry, who was little better this morning."

"He has gone to bring Hunston; he confessed as much to me," replied Jack. "Hunston bribed him to capture me, and he is coming here to kill me!"

"That he nebber do so long as I live, sah. Come back to the camp with me."

"No; Hunston shall fall into the pit he dug for me!"

"How you do that?"

"I shall stay here until they come. Mahmond I will shoot on sight!"

"He deserves it!"

"You see that old tree there? Well, I shall hang Hunston to one of the boughs!"

"Now, you talk sense," said Monday.

"There is no law in the jungle. They want to kill me, and I am fully justified in wiping them out!"

"Golly, Mast Jack, I am glad you make up your mind to settle Hunston; it is a bold move!"

"Much as I hate bloodshed, I must do it."

"Then you go to Bengal tiger shooting?"

"Yes, as India is so close, I must take that in. The pearl I have found is sufficient for me. I shall dive no more," Jack answered.

"Perhaps Hunston heard of that and wants to get it."

"He never will. I mailed it in a registered letter to my wife before I left Colombo."

"That am a good move. You got some food here. I reckon we will have breakfast," said Monday.

Jack after a long spell of captivity was glad enough to eat something.

He and Monday sat in the hut awaiting the coming of Hunston and Mahmond.

They were not kept long in suspense.

The elephant hunter had made a remarkably quick journey to Colombo and back.

Presently they heard the sound of voices.

"Here we are, sahib; this is my hotel in the jungle," exclaimed Mahmond.

"Is Harkaway inside the hut?" asked Hunston.

"Certainly; he is securely bound."

"I have got him at last! He shall not escape me this time, by heaven!"

Young Jack and Monday concealed themselves.

They allowed the two men to alight from the howdah.

"It is good to get out of this cramped position," Hunston observed.

"I am used to it; no matter to me, sahib," replied Mahmond.

At that moment Jack showed himself, rifle in hand.

The apparition was a startling one to the villains.

They fully expected to find the captive an easy prey.

So confident were they that neither of them were armed except with knives.

Little did they think that they should want their guns.

Quick as lightning Jack fired at Mahmond.

Uttering a cry, the hunter fell back dead with a bullet in his brain.

"Surrender!" exclaimed Jack.

Thoroughly nonplussed Hunston held up his arms in token that he did so.

It was utterly useless to offer any resistance.

Monday advanced with a grin, and with a piece of cord tied his wrists together.

"So," said Jack, "you are beaten at your own game. You thought yourself mighty clever, but I have the best of it in the end."

"Yes," replied Hunston, gloomily; "it is like a game of chess. This is check mate."

"I mean it to be, for I shall hang you to that tree over yonder."

"Spare my life and I will never try to injure you again," pleaded Hunston.

"You have said that so often I cannot believe a word you utter."

"On my soul and honor I swear it!"

"Your honor!" repeated Jack, scornfully. "You do not know what the word means!"

"Have some mercy," continued Hunston trembling.

"Not on you," replied Jack. "Have you ever had any on me? You must die."

"At least give me a soldier's death. Shoot me, don't hang me like a dog."

"It is good enough for you. I look upon you as a wild beast. I am going to Bengal to shoot tigers, and I have no more compunction in killing you than I shall have in destroying them, see."

"I hope their fangs will rend you to pieces."

"That shows the kind of man you are; how can I give you your liberty and trust you? Put a rope over a bough and string him up, Monday."

"Me just like to see him dance upon noffin', sah."

In a very short time Monday procured a coil of rope from the hut.

He made a noose in one end and slung the other over a branch of the old tree.

Hunston made no further remark.

He resigned himself to what seemed to be inevitable.

They marched him under the tree.

Monday acted the part of executioner and hauled him up in the air, tying the rope round the trunk.

In a moment his face became black and contorted.

His tongue lolled out of his mouth.

He swang round and round like a teetotum.

"Come, let us depart," said Jack.

He wanted to get away from the sickening sight.

It was not to his liking, but what he had done was a matter of justice to himself.

Monday and he hurried off to the camp to rejoin Harry Girdwood.

If they had looked back they would have seen a strange spectacle.

But they did not turn thir heads.

The tree upon which Hunston was hanging was, as we have mentioned, an old one.

It happened that the bough over which the rope was thrown was rotten.

His weight caused it to snap asunder.

With a dull thud Hunston fell to the ground.

For some time he remained unconscious, but his faculties gradually returned to him.

He rose to his feet and saw that he was alone.

"Saved," he cried. "My time has not yet come. I was not born to be hanged."

A glance at the broken bough showed him how he escaped from death.

His neck, around which there was a red mark, pained him very much.

Yet he was strong enough to walk, and he pushed his way through the jungle.

He was afraid that young Jack and Monday might, by some chance, return.

Making a few brief halts for rest, he kept on until he arrived at Colombo.

His friend Martin greeted him warmly as he entered the restaurant over which they resided.

"Is it all over?" asked Martin.

Hunston sank into a chair exhausted and drank some brandy.

"It was pretty nearly all over with me," he replied.

Then he related all that had happened, much to Martin's astonishment.

For some days he did not leave the house.

Martin, however, was out every day watching for the arrival of Harkaway and his friends.

At the end of the week he came to Hunston in an excited state.

"News from young Jack and Girdwood!" he cried.

"Well, what?" asked Hunston.

"They have gone further into the jungle."

"Can this be possible?"

"It is a fact. I learned it from an Ivory trader who came in this morning—a friend of Mahmond's who is only too anxious to avenge his death."

"In that case he ought to be willing to help us."

"He is more than willing, but he will require money. Like all these Cingalese he is very fond of gold."

"As you know, Martin, money is no object to me if I can only put Harkaway out of the way forever. But we understand each other perfectly on that point. What does this Ivory trader know?"

"Why he visited Harkaway's camp and became quite well acquainted."

"So?"

"Yes. He says Harry Girdwood is all right again and that they decided to push on up the Tulap river to the ruins of Deljai, where they hope to find buried treasure."

"What nonsense!"

"I don't know about that. I have heard myself of the buried treas-

ures of Deljai. It seems that an elephant hunter joined them, who is quite familiar with the ruins. Wojolman tells me——"

"Who the deuce is this Wojolman? You haven't mentioned him before."

"He is the ivory trader."

"On! Ah! Yes! I understand. Well, what does Wojolman tell you?"

"That there certainly is treasure buried among the ruins of Deljai, and that many people have unearthed gold there. He considers Harkaway's chances good."

"We must make them bad then. Would it not be possible for us to get to this ruined city ahead of young Jack and his friends?"

"That Wojolman promised to ascertain for me, and I am to meet him in half an hour."

"Good! See that you do it, Martin. By the way, what about Professor Mole? Will he join in this expedition?"

"He has already joined it, I fancy. He has left the Hotel of All Nations."

"In that case Harkaway probably does not intend to return to Colombo. But we will postpone further conversation until you have seen your friend Wojolman."

It was a little over an hour before Martin returned.

He found Hunston up and dressed, with his valise all packed.

"Well," he demanded, eagerly, "what's the news?"

"I have seen Wojolman, and it is all arranged."

"But how?"

"We go to Point-de-Galle by steamer. From there to the ruins is but a short distance. There is nothing to prevent us from heading off Harkaway, unless the steamer breaks down."

"But we shall need a guide."

"I have provided for that. Wojolman goes with us. He guarantees to betray Harkaway into our hands for one thousand dollars."

"Cheap enough. When do we start?"

"The steamer sails at sundown."

"Then we must be aboard," replied Hunston emphatically.

And they were.

The Cingalese Wojolman was with them.

All of which boded no good for young Jack Harkaway, who firmly believed that he had left Hunston dead—hanging to the limb of the tree beside Mahmond's hut.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RUINS OF DELJAI.

"WELL, Harry, and how are you feeling this morning, dear boy?" inquired young Jack Harkaway, entering the tent one morning after they had been several days on the journey up the Tulap River.

"Better than yesterday, old man—every day better than the one before."

"Practically you are all right again."

"Well, yes; I suppose you may say so. Where have you been, Jack?"

"Just out for a little stroll in the jungle. I managed to bag an elephant, though."

"Hi, Massa Jack, don't see dat yere elephant in your game bag!" cried Monday, who was busy preparing breakfast outside the door of the tent.

"Well, no—hardly that, Monday; but you'll find him back in the jungle. If you've got the coffee ready you had better join Rundoop, our guide, and help him cut off the tusks and bring them down to the boat, for we want to make an early start."

"Now looker yere, Massa Jack, I'm no butcher. Neber brung up to dat sort of business."

"Get along with you," cried Jack. "No doubt Rundoop has got the tusks off by this time, and all you'll be wanted for is to help carry them in."

Monday departed grumbling as he always did at anything outside of his usual work.

"Where's Mole this morning?" inquired Jack, pouring out the coffee.

"Sitting on the river bank writing on his life of Moses," Harry replied.

"The old boy sticks to it well, don't he?"

"He does, and I shouldn't wonder if he finished it."

"I'll give him a call," said Jack. "Here, professor," he shouted. "Come out of the bullrushes and leave Moses to take care of himself while you refresh the inner man."

Mole's answering shout was heard, and presently the professor appeared in person stumping along on his wooden leg.

"How's Moses this morning?" asked Jack, pouring the old man a cup of coffee.

"Moses is all right," replied Mole, "but I want you to understand he has long since left the bullrushes."

"So? Where is he now?"

"In the wilderness, leading the children of Israel to the land of Canaan."

"Hope they may get there all right, and I hope we may reach the ruins before sundown, for I'm more than anxious to prove the truth of what we have heard about the buried treasure."

And buried treasure was all the talk during breakfast, and formed the principal topic during the day, as they sailed down the Tulap river in the handsome boat which Jack had purchased in Colombo, having it brought up into the jungle by elephants, where it was launched on the Tulap not far from its source.

The journey had been a most agreeable one, but the end was now near at hand, for before the sun went down that evening young Jack Harkaway and his companions found themselves at the ruined city of Deljai.

Here the ground on the right bank of the Tulap for a long distance was covered with the ruins of temples and palaces.

Who built them and when no man knows, and as for Jack and Harry, they did not at all care.

All they were after was buried treasure, but whether fortune would favor them in this regard remained to be seen.

Guided by the faithful Cingalese Rundoop, they took up their quarters in a large room in one of the principal palaces.

Here a fire was built, which was to serve equally to drive out the mosquitoes, which swarmed the place, and prevent the approach of wild animals during the night.

Next morning they started in shortly after breakfast to hunt for buried treasure and explore the mines.

Building after building was examined, walls were sounded and rubbish cleared away in the search for hidden trap doors.

No discovery of the slightest importance was made, however.

It began to look very much as though they were going to have their labor for their pains.

When dinner time came Mole was among the missing.

The professor had not accompanied them in their explorations.

He preferred to remain behind in the ruined palace and write on his Life of Moses.

But when they returned they could find nothing of him, which caused Jack not a little alarm.

"Where in the world can the professor be?" he exclaimed, after they had made a thorough search.

"Pshaw! He'll turn up all right," replied Harry. "He's no doubt burrowing somewhere, like the rest of his kind."

"Not half bad for a joke, though old," said Harry; "but all the same it don't bring the professor, and I positively don't sit down to dinner without him."

"Hi!" cried Monday, running up. "Dere he am now! Don't you see?"

Monday pointed to the top of one of the long, low ruined buildings at no great distance away.

There stood the worthy Mole copying in his notebook an inscription on what had once been part of the wall of the second story.

"Hey! Hello, there! Dinner!" Harry shouted.

But Mole was too deeply absorbed in his occupation and did not hear.

All at once Monday gave a sharp cry.

The sight which called it forth was certainly startling enough.

Overhanging the ruins was a tall tree, the branches of which were directly over the professor's head.

What Monday saw all now saw, and that was a huge python slowly lowering its body from the limb to which it clung by means of its tail.

"Great heavens, it's all up with Mole unless something can be done to kill that snake!" gasped Jack.

"He don't see him!" cried Harry, and he shouted to the professor at the top of his lungs.

Mole heard the cry, but with his usual perverseness looked every way but the right one.

Meanwhile young Jack had made a rush for his rifle.

Just as the python was about to make a dart for Mole Jack fired.

Down dropped the huge snake as the professor darted back with a startled cry.

"Saved!" cried Harry.

"To the rescue!" shouted Jack. "He may not be dead yet!"

They all made a dash for the ruin.

Here they met the professor on the stairs.

He had tied a cord around the python and was dragging the big snake after him.

"Ah, Jack, dear boy, you saved my life!" he cried. "I thank you a thousand times and all that sort of thing; but look here—this is a splendid specimen. We must manage to get him to England somehow. I would like to present him to the British Museum, and even if he did sting me in the leg——"

"Sting you in the leg!" gasped Jack. "Good heavens! You don't mean it!"

"Oh, yes, dear boy, but it was my wooden leg, don't you know, and that don't count; as I was saying if we could only manage to get him to England——"

"Drop him and get to your dinner!" cried Jack. "We carry no snakes to England with us unless you happen to get a dose of them from drinking too much."

"Now, that's absurd, Jack," replied Mole, half angrily. "However, if you say drop the python, he's dropped, and the subject with him. How have you made out? Found any buried treasure?"

"Not a rap."

"Too bad. I've found something fully as valuable though."

"What?"

"An inscription on that wall in Sanscrit which convinces me that Moses must have visited this city when he was a young man."

"Stuff and nonsense! What would Moses be doing in Ceylon?"

"Peddling suspenders probably," laughed Harry, coming up the stairs. "Now don't look so black, Mole! Why not? Moses was a Jew, and——"

"There, there, don't let's get up any discussion," interposed Harry.

"I'm half starved, and want to get to my dinner and back to work treasure hunting again."

So they left the snake on the stairs and sat down to dinner.

They had just finished, and Mole was opening a bottle of his favorite Rhine wine, when the door was darkened by a tall Cingalese, who greeted them with a profound bow.

"Hello! Who the deuce are you?" asked Jack.

"My name is Wyra," replied the Cingalese. "The sahib seeks buried treasure—is that the truth?"

"Indeed it is! How did you know?" asked Jack, "and where did you come from? I thought these ruins were deserted except for ourselves."

"I am here, Sahib. I have been watching you all day."

"Is that so—well I'm sure I'm very much obliged to you. Have you come to give us a steer?"

"I am no boatman, Sahib. I have come to reveal a secret."

"Oh, that's it, is it. Out with it. If it relates to buried treasure you shall share equally with us in all we find."

"That is liberal in the Sahib," replied the Cingalese, bowing.

"But look here," exclaimed Harry who was always more skeptical than Jack, "how is it that you come to us with this story? If you know where this buried treasure lies why don't you dig it up yourself; why haven't you dug it up long ago?"

"That is easily explained to the Sahib."

"I wish you'd explain it then."

"It is my religion. These are the temples of my forefathers. A few of us still live who know these secrets, but we are sworn never to lay hands on the buried treasures."

"Nor to reveal the secrets?"

"That is different, sahib. Were we to lay hand on the buried treasure a curse would surely follow us, but if we tell the secret to another, why then the curse of the gods will follow him."

"Mere rubbish," said Mole. "We'll take our chances on that."

"Allow me to do the talking, please, professor," said Jack, adding, "now then, my friend, what are we to do to gain this secret?"

"Follow me, sahib. I can explain to you alone."

A perfect feeling of security had come to young Jack Harkaway now, believing as he did that Hunston was no more.

Unhesitatingly he followed the Cingalese out of the ruin.

When he returned, which was not until something like half an hour later, he was alone.

"Well," cried Harry, "what have you learned?"

"A secret which I firmly believe will be of the greatest value to us—in short, prove to be worth a vast sum of money."

"We are waiting to hear it, Jack."

"Then you will have to wait, for I cannot reveal it."

"The deuce! Am I to be kept in the dark?"

"I have sworn to tell the secret to no one until the buried treasure is unearthed. To-night I go with Wyra to a temple near here. I shall shortly return, and then if my expectations are realized, we spend tomorrow loading down our boat with buried gold."

"But you don't go alone if I know it," declared Harry, emphatically.

"I must! I have given my promise!"

"But, my dear Jack, this is madness! You do not know the man, and ought not to trust yourself with him. I have been speaking to Randoop, our guide, and he fully agrees with me. In short, we all think you incur an awful risk."

"Pshaw! I'm not afraid!" cried Jack. "Hunston is dead, and even if he wasn't I should not hesitate after what I have heard."

Of course, there was no turning Young Jack Harkaway from his purpose once his mind was made up.

The remainder of the day was spent in rambling about the ruins.

But in spite of Harry's most urgent solicitation, in which Mole and Monday both joined, Jack positively refused to reveal his plans.

Night came.

Once supper was over, Jack took his rifle, and bidding his friends good-bye, sallied forth.

"You are not to worry," he said. "I shan't be gone over an hour, and you may rely upon it. I shall come back all right."

To this Harry gave a most reluctant assent, and it was with a sinking heart that he watched young Jack disappear among the ruined walls.

But Jack was not worrying.

He was not that sort.

He walked along the river bank, passing one ruined building after another until he came at last to a small shrine standing at the top of a long flight of steps and half hidden among the trees.

He ascended the steps, and, passing in at the open doorway, gave a peculiar cry.

"I don't know as that is exactly the signal he gave me," he muttered, "but it is as near it as I can remember. I believe that fellow is all right, and if it don't work as he said it would I shall be very much surprised."

He waited impatiently for a few moments.

The silence began to be oppressive.

Jack looked warily into the dark corners of the room, thinking of pythons and of Mole's adventure that morning.

Suddenly he heard a slight sound behind him, and upon looking around, perceived a tall figure in white gliding over the stone paved floor.

It was rather startling.

Still Jack had expected something of this sort, and had no idea of seeing the Cingalese.

As the figure drew nearer Jack perceived that it was an aged man,

dressed in a single, long flowing garment of white, with a beard of the same snowy hue extending far down upon his breast.

"Peace be with you, my son," said the man, raising his hands. "You are undoubtedly the sahib for whom Wyra told me I was to hunt."

"I am, father. You are the priest who was to reveal to me the hiding place of the buried treasure?"

"The sahib speaks words of truth. With my own hands I am sworn to touch it not, but as it lies it is useless and I would rather it be unearthed that it may be of some service to the world and mankind. Of course you understand I expect my share."

"Which you shall undoubtedly have," replied Jack. "You can rely upon me to use you fairly."

"It is well. Let the sahib follow me."

Stooping down the old priest grasped a heavy iron ring which lay imbedded in the floor and raised a square stone trap.

He now produced a torch and proceeded to light it.

Then motioning for Jack to follow him he began the descent of a flight of stone steps which extended down from the trap door.

Jack followed without fear.

There was something so patriarchal in the old man's appearance that he could not doubt him.

Moreover, thus far everything had transpired precisely as Wyra had promised.

The bottom of the steps reached, the old priest paused before a huge upright stone which projected from the wall.

This proved to be a door, for the old man touched a hidden spring and it immediately swung open, revealing behind it a dungeon-like apartment without windows, and walled up with solid stone.

"It is here that the hidden treasure of this shrine lies buried," said the priest. "Look, sahib! You see that shining object on the floor?"

"Certainly," replied Jack. "It looks to me very much like a lump of solid gold."

"Let the sahib stoop and press it twice, and the secret trap will fall."

Jack obeyed.

Something fell!

Trap it certainly was, but not precisely the kind young Jack Harkaway had expected to discover.

Whack—whack!

Two cruel blows, struck with a heavy club, descended upon Jack's head.

He was knocked senseless in an instant.

Through the open door the man Martin instantly sprang.

He was closely followed by Wyra, or Wojolman, for they were one and the same.

"By thunder, he walked into our hands as confidently as a baby!" cried Martin.

"That's right," replied the priest, tearing off a false beard and wig throwing aside the long white garment which covered his clothes.

Then, instead of the venerable priest, there stood Hunston—Hunston and nobody but Hunston.

Young Jack Harkaway was in the hands of his enemies again.

CHAPTER V.

BURIED TREASURE.

WHEN young Jack Harkaway came to his senses Hunston stood over him regarding him with eyes of glittering hate.

Jack was securely bound and entirely helpless.

He stared at the man, scarcely able to credit the plain evidence of his senses.

"You—you again!" he gasped. "Am I dreaming? Hunston, is it you or your ghost?"

"Well, I ain't very much like a ghost," rejoined Hunston gloatingly.

"Yes, it is I, Jack Harkaway. I'm not dead yet."

"But I can scarcely believe it when I hung you with my own hands."

"You did. Before I hated you for your father's sake—now I hate you for your own!"

"But how did you escape?"

"It was the hand of Providence which set him free!"

"I fail to understand you."

"Then in plain English the limb to which you hung me was rotten; my weight broke it and I came down with a crash!"

"Ah! I see. In fact, you need say no more. Since then you have been spying upon me and following me hoping for revenge."

"Exactly."

"The Cingalese Wyra was simply your paid tool, the same as Koko was; the same as Mahmond was; the same——"

"The same as a dozen others have been, Jack Harkaway; yes, you are right."

"And the old priest, I presume, was another?"

"On the contrary, the old priest was none other than your humble servant."

"Indeed! You amaze me! Well, well! Your disguise was perfect."

"I fancy I am a fairly good actor, Jack Harkaway; but there is no use in discussing this situation further. Your moments are numbered. Are you prepared to die?"

"As much as usual, I suppose; I've prepared so many times at your order, Hunston, that I can hardly bring myself to believe that this is actually the last."

"Well, then," replied Hunston, "we'll soon show you that there

will be no occasion for you to bother your head again on that score, for this time you surely 'pass in your checks.'"

"Will nothing turn you from your murderous intentions, Hunston? You know that I am rich. I will write you a draft on London for—"

"Stop, Jack Harkaway! Don't waste your breath by even naming the sum you have in mind. If it was a million it would make no difference. You must die!"

Jack caught his breath.

There seemed no hope.

For a moment neither spoke.

Hunston seemed to take especial pleasure in watching the workings of his victim's countenance, in playing with him as a cat might play with a captured mouse.

Finding that Jack was not going to talk any more, Hunston at length said:

"Well, I'll bid you an affectionate farewell, Jack Harkaway. Before I go I will prepare the way for the other visitors."

"I don't know what you mean," replied Jack quietly.

His courage had not deserted him. He determined to offer only a bold front to his enemy.

"No; but you will know in a few moments," said Hunston in that same gloating way.

"How do you mean to kill me? Why don't you talk it out plain?"

"Because it is part of my revenge that you shall not know. Death is coming, Jack Harkaway. It is coming sure, but how you are not to know until it comes."

These were Hunston's last words.

Then he opened a small door set in the stone wall in front of where Jack lay, about half way between the floor and the ceiling.

"What's that for!" demanded Jack.

But Hunston made no answer. Catching up the lantern he retired, closing the main door of the ancient dungeon behind him.

Left in darkness young Jack Harkaway lost all hope.

A sense of indescribable horror seized him.

The little door which Hunston had opened was not big enough for any human being to pass through.

For what then was it intended?

Jack strained his ears to listen.

It seemed as though he could hear a rustling behind the opening.

Some heavy body seemed to be dragging itself over the stones, and besides the rustling there was a hissing sound.

Horror was now added to horror.

Jack remembered something that their Cingalese guide had told them.

It was to the effect that the ancient inhabitants of Deljai were all serpent worshipers; that they kept huge pythons in their temples; that the descendents of these slimy monsters yet lurked among the ruined walls.

That this was true Jack had already had abundant proof in the case of Mole.

He felt that further proof was coming.

The rustling sound increased.

So did the hissing.

"It's a python. There can be no doubt about it," gasped Jack.

Still he could see nothing, for the darkness of the dungeon was total.

Had it been broken by so much as a single ray of light, young Jack Harkaway would have seen a huge serpent working its way through the little door.

Its head was thrust out toward its victim; it was dragging its slimy body over the stone sill of the little door.

Now all this looked very bad for young Jack Harkaway, it must be admitted.

The anxiety his perilous situation would have caused Harry Girdwood Mole and Monday could they have known it may be easily guessed.

Just at this particular moment Harry and Monday were crouching among the bushes by the bank of the river, not two hundred feet from the flight of steps leading up to the ancient shrine where Jack was held a prisoner.

They appeared to be waiting for somebody, and as they waited they talked in low, suppressed tones.

"Rundoo ought to be back by this time," remarked Harry.

"He'll come," said Monday. "Don't you fear, Massa Harry. He'll come."

"I fear only for Jack," replied Harry. "We should not have allowed him to go off alone with that native under any circumstances. I blame myself, Monday, for not starting out after him sooner. That's what I ought to have done."

"Hark! Rundoo is coming now!" whispered Monday.

Something was coming.

They could see a dark form crawling over the ground towards them. Harry raised his rifle to be prepared in case of trouble.

Up sprang the dark figure which proved to be Rundoo.

"It is as you say, sahib," he breathed. "There was treachery."

"I knew it," said Harry. "What have you learned?"

"Rundoo see two white men go down the river in boat; they are the men you described, sahib."

"Hunston and Martin," cried Harry. "I guessed it. By some strange fatality that villain has escaped and this is more of his work. We must follow them! If they have killed Jack we must know it; we—"

"Wait, sahib," interrupted Rundoo. "They have not killed the sahib Harkaway."

"You know this?"

"Yes."

"But how?"

"They shot their guide—their tool, if you wish to call him so, for he betrayed the young sahib into their hands."

"So? They had used him for all he was worth to them, and then killed him as a reward."

"No, he is not dead, sahib, but he will die!"

"Where is he?"

"Near. He is very low. I gave him help and spoke kindly to him in his own tongue, in return for which he told me what was done with the sahib Harkaway."

"Well, well!" cried Harry, "where is he now? Speak, Rundoo!"

"It is hard for me to tell it, sahib."

"Quick, quick! Speak it out!"

"Then know the worst. The young sahib is imprisoned in the serpent dungeon, of which I told you, where there are always pythons. My worst fears have been realized, sahib. It is too late! Nothing can save your friend now!"

"By heavens, we'll see about that!" cried Harry.

"We must make a try for it," echoed Monday. "We must, Massa Harry! Come! Come!"

And Monday was the first to follow Rundoo who had already started up the river's bank.

Scarcely a word was spoken until they reached the place where the Cingalese Wojolman lay dying.

The native had been fatally wounded by a bullet from the rifle of the treacherous Hunston.

This was his reward for betraying Jack.

The money already paid him had been taken by Martin before the two villains started down the river in their boat.

All this Wojolman had already told to Rundoo, who in turn had communicated it to Harry Girdwood and Monday.

Consequently a few brief words were all that was necessary when they came upon the man.

Harry did the talking.

Could he save young Jack Harkaway, or was it too late?

He could take them to the serpent dungeon, and would, but that was all.

Whether or not young Jack Harkaway still lived he could not say.

Harry saw that it was of no use to question the dying wretch further.

They raised him between them, and supported him up the steps.

In the same way they were led through the trap door and down the stairs to the door of the dungeon.

Wojolman showed them how to open it.

Harry's heart was in his mouth as the door flew back, for so far they had not heard a sound.

Monday flashed the dark lantern which he carried into the narrow cell.

At the same instant both he and Rundoo gave a horrified cry.

There lay young Jack Harkaway bound and helpless.

Crawling toward him over the stone floor was a huge python.

Another was just coming out through the little door.

"Harry—Harry!" shouted Jack. "Kill them, Harry! Save me, dear boy!"

But Harry Girdwood needed no bidding.

Two shots rang out through the dungeon.

Harry's aim was perfect.

Each shot killed a python.

The agony of the moment was over, and young Jack Harkaway was saved.

It was the faithful Monday who cut away his bonds.

In a moment they were on their feet again.

But death was in the dungeon.

Before any one could say a word the Cingalese Wojolman sank down with a low cry.

The end had come.

In a moment Wojolman was no more, and this before Jack could be made to fully comprehend the presence of the man whom he believed to be his mortal enemy.

But explanations speedily followed, and congratulations came afterward.

Jack Harkaway shook Rundoo's hand warmly feeling that it was more to the faithful Cingalese than anyone else that he owed his life.

The pythons being more closely examined proved to be the largest of their kind.

No doubt Mole would have gone into raptures over them if he could have seen them.

But the mere sight of the hideous serpents made Harry shudder and he wanted to leave the dungeon at once.

But Rundoo interfered.

"I tell the sahib he had better first see what is behind that little door," said Rundoo.

"Do you suspect the existence of buried treasure there, Rundoo?" inquired Jack.

"Rundoo no know, sahib," was the reply.

"There is buried treasure somewhere in Deljai. That is a secret place, perhaps it may be so."

"By Heaven, we'll soon settle it then," cried Jack. "Lend us your lantern, Monday, and we'll see what there is in that hole."

"Look out, Massa Jack! Dere may be more snakes in dere," cried Monday.

"I'll take my chances," said Jack, with all his old enthusiasm.

"Boost me up, Harry. That's the talk!"

And Jack flashed the lantern into the hole.

A cry of joy burst from his lips.

"What is it?" demanded Harry.

"Well, what we are looking for, dear boy. There's gold enough down there to buy out a king."

Of course, everybody was thrown into a high state of excitement by this announcement.

First, Harry had to climb up and look.

Then it was Monday.

Then Rundoop must take his turn.

After all the exclamations were over, they began to plan ways and means of getting out the treasure and conveying it to the boat.

It took them the best part of the night to accomplish this.

While the boat was brought down the river as near as possible to the shrine by Harry and Rundoop, Jack and Monday remained on guard in case Hunston and Martin should take it into their heads to return.

But they did not, and before daylight the last of the gold was on board.

Great was the astonishment of Mole, who had slept all night in the tent, when he was taken to the boat and shown the buried treasure.

He went into raptures over the ancient gold coins, many of which he declared were immensely valuable.

"These are Hebrew letters on them, dear boy," he said to Jack, pointing to the inscription upon one specimen, as big as a dollar and twice as thick. "This only goes to prove my theory that Moses must have visited this city in the days of its prime."

"Bother Moses!" cried Harry. "It's the value of the stuff, I'm after."

And so they sailed on down the river to Point-de-Galle.

Here they sold the buried treasure to a Jew for a sum a little short of one hundred thousand dollars.

Three days later young Jack and Harry Girdwood, with Mole and Monday, sailed for Calcutta, well pleased with the outcome of their adventures among the "Pearl Divers of Ceylon."

[THE END.]

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